

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) tonight released the following statement in response to President Obama's State of the Union address.

"I stand ready to work with President Obama to help continue moving our country along the path of recovery by creating jobs, providing relief to middle class Americans, and laying the groundwork for long-term economic prosperity while also securing final passage of a comprehensive health care reform bill. The economic circumstances in this country are certainly better than they were a year ago, but far too many Americans are struggling to get by and those of us in Congress must continue to work aggressively to provide a helping hand. Through sustained investments in our country's own internal needs, though not through any particular budget freeze, we can and will fully recover and improve the quality of life for Americans.

"I share the president's commitment to creating jobs and have been aggressively working to lay the foundation for new businesses and technologies in New York, particularly in the renewable energy sector, to take off and become major employers in our state. At the same time we're laying the foundation for long-term job growth, we're also working to support those individuals and families who have been hit hard by the economic downturn through a combination of policies, including extended unemployment and COBRA insurance, increased college tuition assistance, and expanded aid to help pay for child care as well as care for elderly loved ones. We also need to pass a substantial piece of health care reform legislation so that the daunting financial burden that so many Americans face in the form of skyrocketing health care is finally lifted.

"In order to accomplish all of these important things we need to ensure that the legislative process is transparent and functions properly. The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling last week that effectively allows major corporations to buy elections underscores the need for dramatic reform that will ensure the voices of the people are heard and represented, not those of the special interests. Combined with reigning in Wall Street's outrageous practices and bonus giveaways at the expense of taxpayers, we'll be taking concrete steps in Congress to end the undue influence and power that an elite few hold over honest, hard-working Americans.

"In addition to economic priorities at home, we must continue to ensure that our country is secure from threats at home and around the world. Through smart policies and sound investments in homeland security and improved relationships with other countries, we can do a much better job of keeping our country safe. With regard to military policy, I was very pleased to

see the president call for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" -- a discriminatory policy that never should have been adopted in the first place.

"The damage from reckless domestic and foreign policies of the past are still being felt today, but we would be far worse off were it not for many of the steps we've already taken. There remains an enormous amount of work to be done to help the many Americans who are still hurting. I am committed to working with President Obama and my colleagues in Congress to enact significant reforms that will make real, positive differences for the people of our country."